

An Unexplored World of Plants and Animals.

Roraima Lifts Its Mysterious Forest- Clad Tableland 2,000 Feet in the Sky and Can Only Be Reached in Balloons.

Evidence which has been unearthed during the past year as a result of the Venezuelan dispute, and much of which is now held before the public, reveals the existence on the borders of British Guiana of a new wonderland. In addition to a marvellous mountain, there have been found relics of a former civilization that existed in America ages before the time of its discovery by Columbus. The Spaniards, as we know, found races that were white, or nearly so.

But these later discoveries go to show that long interior, at a time, in fact, prob-

frequency of the representations of such things in these old bas-reliefs, as extensively.

In these sculptures we can see the very shape of the knives used, the form of the plates or platters on which several heads of victims were placed, and other such details; and in a certain series we are enabled to note the curious point that, while the officiating priests always wear full beards, the victims appear to have usually possessed no hair on their heads, or to have "shaved clean," as we term it. It may be added that these ancient white people

with the dispute that has arisen about the boundaries of British Guiana.

It has been suggested that if it is too late to retain the wonderful Roraima as exclusively British, and to effect this it would be well worth our while to barter away some other portion of the disputed territory—then an arrangement might be made to make it neutral ground, standing, as it does, in the corner where the three countries—Brazil, Venezuela and British Guiana—meet, it is of importance to all three, and, no doubt, in such an endeavor, we should have the support of Brazil as against Venezuela.

"Will no one explore Roraima and bring us back the tidings which it has been waiting these thousand years to give us? One of the marvels and mysteries of the earth lies on the outskirts of our colonies, and we leave the mystery unsolved, the marvel unshared for."

It is perhaps not generally known that Roraima Mountain, one of the earth's greatest mysteries, one of the most stupendous wonders of the world, is situated within the disputed Venezuelan territory. On the map drawn by Sir Robert Schomburgk for the British Government, Roraima stands within the British domains, but on the map drawn by Mr. Barrington Brown, the Government explorer who succeeded Schomburgk, and whose work was based upon that of his predecessor, Roraima is placed inside the Venezuelan boundary, and no explanation is given for the apparent contradiction. Again, another authority, Mr. Im Thurn, Curator of the Museum of Georgetown (the capital of the colony), says in his book, "Among the Indians of British Guiana," that Roraima lies on the extreme edge of the colony, or perhaps, on the other side of the Brazilian

plant zone, full of wondrous forms that lay as if by magic before me."

Out of this dark, mysterious tropical forest abruptly rises the mountain itself. Its inaccessible summit is a great table-land which, it is believed, has been isolated from the rest of the world for untold ages. This is no wilderness of ice and snow, but a fertile country of wood and stream and probably lakes. As described by Mr. Barrington Brown, it is "a great table of pink and white and red sandstone, interbedded with red shale," and it rises from a height of 5,100 feet above the level of the sea, 2,000 feet sheer into the sapphire tropical sky. A forest crowns it.

The highest waterfall in the world—only one, it would seem, out of several—tumbles from its summit, 2,000 feet at one leap, 5,000 more on a slope of forty-five degrees to the bottom of the valley, broad enough to be seen thirty miles away. Even the length of the mass has not been determined. Mr. Brown says it is from eight to twelve miles.

And he cannot help speculating whether the remains of a former era may not be found at its top. At any rate, there is the forest on its summit; of what trees it is composed? They cannot well be the same as those of the base. At a distance of fifteen hundred feet above sea-level, the mango tree of the West Indies, which produces fruit in abundance below, ceases to bear. The change in vegetation must be far more decided where the difference is between five thousand and seven thousand feet.

Thus for millenniums this island of sandstone in the South American Continent must have had its own distinct flora. What may be its fauna? Very few birds

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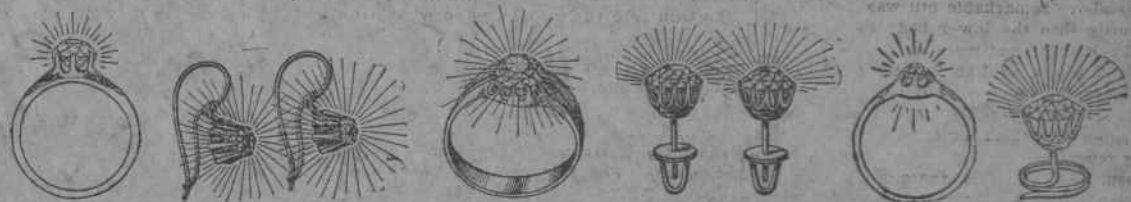
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The Devil Tree, Which Strangles People—From a New Book on Venezuela.

ably coeval with what we call the Egyptian civilization, America was peopled with a white race as fully cultured, as advanced in the sciences, and as powerful on their own ground as the ancient Egyptians, and as handsome in personal appearance—if some of the hands and faces on the specimens of pottery may be accepted as fair examples—as the ancient Greeks.

It has long been known that America possesses extraordinary relics of a former civilization in what are known as the great "earthworks," which are still to be seen scattered about in many parts of the continent, and which, as vast engineering works, challenge comparison with the pyramids themselves. But now discovery has gone much further: bas-reliefs and pottery have been found that set forth with marvellous fidelity many minute details concerning this prehistoric people—their personal appearance and their ornaments and handicrafts; the style of wearing the hair and the beard, and other particulars that can be appreciated only by inspection and study of the reduced fac-similes lately printed and issued by the Government of the United States.

Many of them relate to the custom of human sacrifice, which, as most people are probably aware, prevailed largely in America when the Spaniards first landed; though few, perhaps, know the terrible extent to which it was carried. Prescott tells us that few writers have ventured to estimate the yearly number of victims at less than 20,000, while many put it as high as 50,000 in Mexico alone.

If we consider that the lowest of these estimates represents an average of some four hundred a week, or nearly sixty a day, such figures are appalling. And now we learn beyond the possibility of a doubt that the same practices obtained in America in times that must have been ages before the Spanish conquest, and, judging by the

seem to have been a totally different race from those whom the Spaniards found of the continent, and that between the two there is believed to have been a gap lasting for many ages, during which the country was overrun by Indian or other barbaric hordes, though how or why this came about is one of those mysteries that will probably never be unravelled.

All these curious and interesting facts are given in the introduction to a new book which, appearing with much fineness in view of the Venezuelan dispute, is now attracting universal attention in England, and has just been published in this country by the New Amsterdam Book Company. It is entitled "The Devil Tree of El Dorado," and is written by Frank Aubrey and based upon the mystery of the mountain of Roraima.

The author has given his father the fullest range. One of his conceptions is the mythical devil tree, which devours human beings, and which takes the place of a public executioner, being in itself a hideous device worthy of the Spanish Inquisition. The story itself is full of a horrible fascination, but to the judicial mind the facts which preface the fiction are far more interesting and romantic than the tale woven from them. The author states that one of the objects of his work has been to direct England's attention to Roraima Mountain in connection with the Venezuelan question.

"Shall Roraima be handed over to Venezuela?" he asks. "Shall the mysterious mountain long known to scientists as foremost among the wonders of our earth—regarded by many as the greatest marvel of the world—become definitely Venezuelan territory? This is the question that hangs in the balance at the time these words are written—that is inseparably associated, though many of the public know it not,

boundary. So that the exact location of this marvel among mountains seems invested in much obscurity.

As, however, Sir Robert Schomburgk and Mr. Barrington Brown actually visited the Roraima region and reached the foot of the mountain, and their successor did not what they have to say of it would seem to have the greater weight. It was about sixty years ago that Sir Robert, the famous explorer and scientist, made his report of Roraima—pronounced Roreema by the Indians of British Guiana—to the Royal Geographical Society, and that marvellous report was as full of romantic fascination to the average reader as to the man of science. Only one other traveller, Mr. Brown, has reached the foot of the mountain since Schomburgk's time, but no one has added anything to the wonders revealed by him, and all have confirmed the statements of Mr. Brown and Sir Robert Schomburgk as to its absolute inaccessibility.

One of the reasons why the mountain is so difficult of approach that only two explorers have ever reached its base, is the superstitious terror with which it is regarded by the Indians, who cannot be induced to aid in cutting away the impenetrable forests which surround it, and which render the travellers' progress impossible. As to the unusual character of the vegetation and undergrowth of this forest, there is the valuable testimony of Richard Schomburgk, Sir Robert's brother, a botanist of wide reputation, who had travelled in Asia and Africa in search of orchids and other rare plants, and who says that the country around Roraima is, from a botanical point of view, one of the most wonderful in the world.

"Not only the orchids," he says, "but the shrubs and low trees were unknown to me. Every shrub, herb and tree was new to me. If not as to family, yet as to species, I stood on the border of an unknown

probably ascend to a height of two thousand feet in the air, the vulture tribe—extended. Nearly the whole of its animated inhabitants are likely to be as distinct as its plants.

"Is it peopled with human beings?" asks Mr. Brown. "Who can tell? Why not? The climate must be temperate, delicious. There is abundance of water, very probably issuing from some lake on the summit. Have we here a group of unknown brothers cut off from all the rest of their kind?"

One more wonder remains to be told. The traveller speaks of two other mountains in the same district which are of the same description as Roraima—tablets of sandstone rising up straight into the blue, one larger than though not as high as Roraima itself. It is only because of their existence, and because, for aught that appears, they may be actually inaccessible with Roraima, that one does not venture to call Roraima the greatest marvel and mystery of the earth!

The appeal to the imagination seems to have stirred even the sober, cautious scientist, Schomburgk. Speaking of the geographical structure of the region which leaves little doubt that it was once the bed of an inland lake, he says:

"May we not connect with the former existence of this inland sea the fable of the Lake Parima and the El Dorado? Thousands of years may have elapsed; generations may have been buried and returned to dust; nations, who once wandered on its banks may be extinct and exist no more in name; still, tradition of Parima and the El Dorado survive these changes of time; transmitted from father to son, its fame was carried across the Atlantic and kindled the romantic fire of the chivalrous Raleigh."

Most authorities—Humboldt, as well as Schomburgk—agree in giving British Guiana as the probable site of this traditional city.

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LADY. I gave a handful of Ripans Tabules to an old gentleman of Brooklyn, and he said their effect upon him has been most remarkable.

FRIEND. What was the matter with him, anyway?

L. He is a weicher, and works about the wharves and warehouses. He said that always after eating he would be troubled with gases, and there would be a sensation as of a load on the pit of his stomach which made him very uncomfortable.

F. Well, what good did the Ripans do him?

L. I don't know how they did it, but he says they were effective from the start, and he was surprised to see how quickly one would give him relief. I think it is quite remarkable, for he is a confirmed dyspeptic and positively sneered at the idea of a medicine which didn't seem to think things could reach his